

Message Text

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ARA/PAN - S. MOREY BELL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 022609

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PANAMANIAN PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON NEGOTIATIONS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR AND ROGERS FROM BUNKER

1. I ASKED GONZALEZ-REVILLA TO LUNCH TODAY TO EMPHASIZE
ADVERSE EFFECTS THE RECENT SPATE OF MEDIA REPORTS AND
STATEMENTS BY PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS RE ALLEGED NEGOTIATING
PROGRESS WERE HAVING ON ATMOSPHERE HERE AND IN CANAL ZONE.
I POINTED OUT THAT SUCH REVELATIONS COMPLICATED OUR
ABILITY TO MAINTAIN NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY AND MOMENTUM.
THEY ALSO INCREASED DIFFICULTY IN SUCH AREAS AS UNILATERAL
ACTIONS WHERE CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS WERE OFTEN
REQUIRED. MOREOVER THEY CREATED UNWARRANTED EXPECTATIONS
IN PANAMA REGARDING STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES.
I ADDED THAT AS HE WELL KNEW WE HAD A LOT OF TOUGH BAR-
GAINING BEFORE US AND TO RAISE THE SPECTRE OF AN IMMINENT
BREAKTHROUGH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS COULD WELL GENERATE
UNNECESSARY FRUSTRATION AND LEAD TO A REPEAT OF UNFORTUNATE
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PUBLIC CHARGES SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH MARRED OUR SEPTEMBER
ROUND. I SAID THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES I COULD NOT AT

THIS TIME RECONFIRM OUR ARRIVAL IN PANAMA NEXT WEEK.

2. GONZALEZ-REVILLA TOOK EXTENSIVE NOTES AND SAID HE WOULD

REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO TORRIJOS IMMEDIATELY. HE ASKED IF IN MY VIEW A CLARIFYING STATEMENT REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE USEFUL. I SAID THAT OF COURSE A STATEMENT CORRECTING EARLIER REPORTS AND EMPHASIZING THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROCEEDING AT AN ORDERLY PACE WOULD HELP. I POINTED OUT IN THAT REGARD THAT IN THE WAKE OF CURRENT REPORTS COMING OUT OF PANAMA, THE SECRETARY MAY WELL BE ASKED SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS DURING HIS FORTHCOMING PRESS CONFERENCE IN LOS ANGELES. SHOULD THAT OCCUR, THE SECRETARY WOULD NATURALLY HAVE TO STATE THAT WE HAVE NOT YET REACHED FINAL AGREEMENTS ON THE MAJOR NEGOTIATING ISSUES (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. COMMENT: GONZALEZ-REVILLA SEEMED FULLY TO UNDERSTAND DELICACY OF SITUATION, AND PROBABLY WILL DO HIS BEST TO GET PANAMA TO RELEASE SOME STATEMENT TO TRY TO GET THEM OFF THE HOOK. IN THAT REGARD, I UNDERSTAND BILL ROGERS WILL FOLLOW UP WITH TORRIJOS TO MAKE CERTAIN THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING REGARDING OUR POSITION. WHILE WE CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK ON THIS ONE MAYBE WE CAN GENERATE SOME DAMAGE-LIMITING ACTION. KISSINGER

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